

*Camps*

## from Chappa Challa

by Morrison Bump

Chappa Challa borders on a dying salt marsh. Ditches dug years ago have nearly vanished, and clogged culverts have restricted tidal flow. The members of the community here, with the help of "friends of marshes," are working to restore life and health to its neighboring lands by improving tidal circulation and drainage.

Chappa Challa also borders on society which ails as well. For most of us, the innocence of earlier years is nearly vanished, and communication to those who might care and love has become restricted. We try, however, with the valuable assistance of our many volunteers, to restore some health to those whose journey from childhood to maturity has foundered.

Yet both contributions, to land and man, sometimes seem minor and ephemeral. But perhaps some parts of our marsh will remain healthy, and perhaps we will have smoothed the seas confronting some of us. If so, our summer will prove worthwhile.

Really, our community is not so different from the surrounding society. We treat our brothers and sisters honestly, expose our intentional and unintentional hypocrisies; and respect each other's integrity and uniqueness. Our rules are simple and few.

Yet some might view Chappa Challa as something different. Recently, at a meeting for volunteers where we tried role-playing to stimulate empathy,

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one girl exposed the here-there dichotomy. Why, she asked, do people volunteer to work, reason and rap with us here while continuing to yell at their own kids? If the lessons learned here are not utilized elsewhere, our experiment will have failed.

Having faith that failure is not our lot, we have made giant steps these last few weeks. The kitchen now functions, and is partly supplied from contributions from Duxbury churches. The garden, though begun late in June, thrives with transplants and fast growing vegetables; and the softball field suffered its first game in years. We now have an office where visitors and members of the community check in and out. And most importantly, our community is growing as the word spreads. Last week we had 17 residents.